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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a system of educational governance for an urban, high technology society that is capable of realizing the social goals of public education while accomodating individual rights and concerns. The present educational system was designed over a century and a half ago for a low technology, agrarian society. While the social and technological shape of America has experienced revolutionary change, the shape of the schools and their governance have been remarkably isolated from these events. If the schools are again to perform their expected role in society, they must be brought into step with that society. In order to develop a structure which enhances equity while accommodating individual tastes, the author proposes a separation of educational decision-making responsibilities with respect to finance, provision of services, and selection of schools. Persons at the metropolitan or state level would establish general educational objectives and minimum educational standards, evaluate programs, plan for and coordinate the development of educational services and facilities, negotiate salaries, and determine and provide necessary financial resources. School-level professionals would determine specific educational objectives for their school, select or develop the curriculum and the educational technologies to be used, allocate resources to specific programs, and select personnel. Parents would decide which schools their children are to attend. (Author/RM)

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A New Public School Compromise for the Twenty-first Century: New Mechanisms for Formulating Educational Policy*

Austin D. Swanson, Professor of Education
State University of New York at Buffalo

*Prepared for presentation at the first meeting of the Education Section of the World Future Society, University of Houston, Houston, Texas, October 21, 1978.

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A New Public School Compromise for the Twenty-first Century: New Mechanisms for Formulating Educational Policy*

Austin D. Swanson, Professor of Education
State University of New York at Buffalo

Criticism of public education has reached a new high as more and more of Middle America joins the ranks of the disenchanted which formerly consisted primarily of ethnic minorities and the poor. The schools have never been as effective in educating children of lower socio-economic class and minority backgrounds as they have with children of the middle class. For over a generation, poor and minority groups have been quite effective in causing reform of the schools through the courts, bringing about desegregation of school districts in all sections of the country and forcing greater equity in the financing of public education. Middle America had been stalwart in its support of the status quo and has generally opposed the initiatives of reform seekers; but with a fifteen year decline in SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) scores and a growing rate of functional illiteracy even in suburbia, its faith in the public schools has been seriously shaken also. To compound Middle America's concern, the decline in achievement has taken place while costs skyrocketed despite dropping enrollments. Public anxiety is at such a level that the Columbia Broadcasting System found it appropriate to assign its veteran reporters Walter Cronkite and Charles Collingwood to explore the subject in a three hour documentary broadcast during prime time (8:00-9:00 P.M., August 22-24, 1978). The title of the documentary reflects the nagging public uncertainty, "Is Anyone Out There Learning?"

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The erosion of support by the middle class coupled with court decisions pursued by minorities and the poor have created a relatively fluid situation which is likely to result in sweeping changes in the system of public education. Remedies implemented in the wake of recent court decisions concerning the finance and desegregation of public schools could bring about the equity sought by plaintiffs or they could result in the middle class abandoning public schools for private institutions -- and taking public financial support with them, e.g. the current battle in Congress over tax credits for tuition paid to private elementary and secondary schools.

The situation is critical, not only for public school institutions, but for society at large because of the important socializing functions which have been entrusted to public schools. For one who views contemporary problems in a historical context, the apparent breakdown of the public educational system should not be particularly surprising. The system was designed over a century and a half ago for a low technology, agrarian society. While the social and technological shape of America has experienced revolutionary change, the shape of the schools and their governance have been remarkably isolated from these events. If the schools are again to perform their expected role in society, they must be brought into step with that society.

The purpose of this paper is to propose a system of educational governance for an urban, high technology society that is capable of realizing the social goals of public education while accommodating the rights and concerns of individuals. The proposal attempts to restore equity to public education while encouraging pluralism within

the society that supports it by separating the decision-making responsibilities for finance, school design and operation, and school assignment. It provides for educational options within a system of overall public supervision.

The roots of the present educational governance structure lie in the public school compromises of the nineteenth century. Even the name of the resulting "common school" testified to its dominating characteristic. It was to provide a learning environment wherein all children of the community, rich and poor alike, could be educated. It sought "the nurture of a common core of sentiment, of value, and/or practice within which pluralism would not become anarchy."[1] It was to be a microcosm of society. To attract the poor was of little diffculty; but to attract the middle class, the common school had to maintain standards equal or superior to competing private schools. The price the state paid for universal schooling was decentralization of control to local authorities. How successful the common school was in achieving its purposes is a point of controversy; nevertheless, public schools increasingly were viewed as important instruments of acculturation, integration, and social mobility.

The size of most communities in the early nineteenth century made common schools a real possibility for virtually all of the population. By 1850, when the common school was well established, there was only one city with a population over 500,000 and only ten cities with populations over 50,000. Only 236 communities were listed by the census as having more than 2,300 inhabitants. Over 82 percent of the population lived in "rural" areas.

With the emergence of large cities, metropolitan areas, and megalopolises, commonness, in the sense of the nineteenth century, is no longer possible. The present alignment of nearly 5,000 school districts in 227 metropolitan areas has created great disparities among the characteristics of people found in these districts and in the resources available to them for providing public educational services. Core cities are surrounded by suburban development, which accounts for 58 percent of the population of metropolitan areas. Suburbanites disproportionately represent the middle and upper middle classes while in the core, students from ethnic minorities frequently make up the majority of public school enrollments.

A variety of remedies have been proposed or attempted to adapt educational governance structures designed for rural areas to ones appropriate for urban situations. New York City decentralized many of its operational decisions to community school boards in order to permit greater participation by the citizens of the city. Decentralization plans have been considered and/or implemented by other cities including Chicago and Los Angeles. Buffalo moved from an appointed school board to an elected one with the intent of making the decisions of the board more reflective of the desires of the public. The United States Office of Education offered financing for implementation and evaluation of one of the more radical proposals for community involvement -- educational vouchers -- but was rewarded largely with frustration. Only one district, Alum Rock (San Jose, California), of the several which carefully studied vouchers actually implemented a plan, and its plan was a severely limited version of the original voucher concept.[2]

The equity issue has been pursued largely through the courts by those who have challenged practices of racial segregation among schools and of uneven distribution of resources and expenditures among school districts. In California, New Jersey, New York and Connecticut, among others, state courts have ruled that expenditures for education must be a function of the wealth of the state alone and not of school districts. In Wilmington, Louisville, and Indianapolis, courts have required metropolitan solutions to school segregation and in many school districts, attendance areas that resulted in racially identifiable schools have been forbidden. The Fleischmann Commission, which conducted a three-year study of the cost and quality of the schools in New York State, recommended full state assumption of the financing of education while giving more operational discretion to building administrators. Fleischmann's proposals were never adopted in New York, but several states have imposed maximum and minimum expenditure levels on school districts.

Decentralization of decision making about the operation of schools appears to be progressing in some areas, while decision making about resource allocation and pupil distribution is being centralized in other areas. In no place, however, are the problems seen as symptoms of a general breakdown in the educational governance system resulting from the inability of a system designed for totally different conditions to function effectively in the modern era.

WHY A MONOPOLY?

The nineteenth-century common school compromise made the operation of schools a public monopoly with the locus of control at the school

district level. The smallness of communities characteristic of that period and their ethnic diversity, a result of massive immigration, made such an arrangement almost compelling despite the overwhelming preference of the country for providing goods and services through private enterprise.

Even today in rural areas, monopolistic administration may be defended on the basis of economies of scale, but a large village has fully accrued what economies of scale there are when supplementary support services are available through intermediate districts. Conclusions from studies of economies of scale in education have taken a dramatic turn in recent years. From the beginning of this century through the 1960's, the overwhelming evidence seemed to support large school districts and large schools in terms of economies, the amount and diversity of teacher resources, and the high caliber of professional and administrative personnel which they could attract. As researchers have begun to take into account total cost and socio-economic status of pupils, and to include additional criteria such as achievement, pupil self-image, and success in college, economies of scale appear to evaporate at very low numbers of pupils and diseconomies become readily apparent. With the emerging emphasis on individualization of instruction, the more sophisticated use of instructional technology, and the creation of intermediate educational support agencies, the effect of size of school or district unit will be virtually neutralized.[3]

The threat of ethnic diversity to a common culture has also ceased to be a justification for operating schools as a public monopoly. The numbers immigrating to this country have declined sharply and immigration is strictly controlled by federal regulation. In addition, there

are now new and powerful purveyors of culture that did not exist in the nineteenth century -- the electronic media and the mass market. Economist Milton Friedman has acknowledged the historical role of public schools in molding one nation, but goes on to observe that: "Our problem today is not to enforce conformity; it is rather that we are threatened with an excess of conformity. Our problem is to foster diversity...."[4]

Friedman's view is shared by others who believe that the United States has become too homogeneous. They hold that a greater amount of cultural diversity is needed, a diversity based on ideological preferences rather than on ethnic heritages. They propose a new type of cultural pluralism -- a pluralism of cultures of equal status. Jean-Francois Revel, a French journalist, convincingly argues that in spite of strong homogenizing influences, the United States is on the verge of such pluralism.

> Cultural uniformity ... is often more constraining in older and more traditional societies than in those which are more highly evolved. Technological plenty, in fact, opens the door to the formation of unexpected cultural minorities, to the diversification of life style and -- to choose at random -- of artistic creativity and of styles in clothing.... The sole support of cultural diversity will henceforth be technological conformity; and it will be a cultural diversity which aims, not at preserving, but at discovering. The minorities of the future will be constituted on the basis of choice, and not of custom.
>
> In the past, the diversity of cultures was balanced by the uniformity of individuals within those cultures. That is, individuals were created by cultures. In the future, cultures will be created by individuals. The cultures of the past, although they differed among themselves, created individuals who resembled one another. Henceforth -- and the process has already begun in the United States -- all individuals, on the basis of their affinities, will regroup to create cultures which will no longer be wholly conditioned by a system of production.[5]

Milton Friedman has argues further that we are more likely to gain agreement on critical public issues if we do not insist upon agreement on issues that may be of grave concern to the individual but have little social import. He notes:

> The widespread use of the market reduces the strain on the social fabric by rendering conformity unnecessary with respect to any activities it encompasses. The wider the range of activities covered by the market, the fewer are the issues on which explicit political decisions are required and hence on which it is necessary, the greater is the likelihood of getting agreement while maintaining a free society.[6]

Thus, the compelling conditions which justified the monopolistic public administration of educational services in the nineteenth century no longer exist. Under contemporary conditions, such a monopoly seriously weakens the forces operating to insure use of the most efficient technology and makes the politics of educational decision-making extraordinarily complex. The cost of continuing this arrangement is high and undesirable.

From an economic perspective, the public monopoly in education has resulted in the inefficient use of resources by the system and an apparent decline in its effectiveness. As noted by Christopher Jencks, "Public control puts a premium not on achieving a few spectacular successes but on avoiding any spectacular failures."[7] This bias against "spectacular failure" needs to be balanced with incentives to produce "spectacular successes." Such a balance would not be as critical if there were a theory of learning capable of guiding the development and evaluation of educational technology. But there is no such theory

and no technology has been shown to be superior to all others. Teaching remains more an art than a science. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to justify the monotonous uniformity of schools from Maine to California. This uniformity is a product of the decision-making process, not of pedagogical considerations. From an economic perspective, a system of diversity, permitting varied approaches to educational objectives proclaimed by society, is preferable to one that produces uniformity. Diversity enables comparisons to identify the most efficient instructional technologies. Diversity also provides a broader data base from which to study the learning process itself.

From a political standpoint, the public monopoly in education has strained the social fabric to the point of rending. There is no slack; society makes all significant decisions. It determines the school to which a child is to be sent as well as the philosophy curriculum and pedagogical style of that school. Theoretically parents have the option of private schools, but their cost effectively eliminates such an option even for most middle class parents. In reality, society has little concern over which school a specific child attends as long as the school meets certain minimum standards; but the parent/child does. Society has little concern over what instructional technology is used as long as the technology is efficient; but the parent/child may and the educational profession certainly does. Even over matters of philosophy and

curriculum, societal interest is at best no stronger than the interest of the individual; but social objectives can be realized over a range of philosophies and curricular constructs, while realization of the individual's objectives may require more specific accommodations. Social stress could be greatly reduced through permitting the parent/child affordable options in schooling. Societal concerns can be satisfied through public regulation of those options.

It has been argued that many parents are incapable of choosing intelligently among educational options and that they could become easy prey to unscrupulous hucksters. Others suggest that some parents do not have the desire to make such choices for their children and would not exercise choice of options if they were available. These assertions may be true; but, the existence of such parents does not in itself justify a public school monopoly any more than the presence of child beaters justifies the state taking over the rearing of children. What it does suggest is that any arrangement for permitting choice in schooling must provide safeguards for children, parents, and society against the possibility of abuses.

There are many examples of government intervention on behalf of the public interest which fall short of public operation. Sanitary public eating places are assured through governmental inspection although the establishments are privately owned and operated. Medicare and medicaid finance health services at public expense but leave to individuals the selection of doctors and hospitals to provide those services. Advertising by medical practitioners and lawyers is carefully regulated by law. The list is almost endless.

A NEW PUBLIC SCHOOL COMPROMISE

Under modern circumstances the decision-making authority for education is badly allocated. Collective decisions are being forced where personal decisions are more appropriate. Other decisions are being made on a neighborhood, ethnic, or class basis when a collective community decision is more desirable from a societal standpoint.

Human intellectual development is one of the most complex aspects of human society. It transcends all levels of government and is central to the welfare and happiness of each individual. Because of its complexity, decisions concerning education must be broadly shared.

On the surface it would appear that the attempts to correct the structural weaknesses of the status quo are based on conflicting principles. The solution for fragmentation is centralization; but, while permitting greater equity in the distribution of both fiscal and pupil resources to the educational process, such actions aggravate undesirable monopolistic effects. Breaking the public monopoly on schooling improves the ability to satisfy individual tastes and may lead to more efficient educational technologies; but it could also aggravate inequities in the allocation of fiscal and pupil resources and weaken public control over the social purposes of education. By separating the functions of financing, producing, and selecting educational services, it may be possible to develop a structure which enhances equity and other social purposes while accommodating individual tastes.

Decisions concerning educational objectives in which the public interest is paramount need to be made collectively at a level which represents a wide spectrum of the groups which collectively makeup the public--at the metropolitan level or at the state level. Following

recent state court guidelines, financial decisions need to be made on the basis of the resources of the state taking into account the educational needs of the learners. Decisions of a technical nature, those which pertain to the organizing of resources into instructional processes, can best be determined by members of the educational profession. In the absence of a defined educational technology, these need to be decentralized permitting professionals freedom to develop and to test a variety of teaching techniques. This means that far more discretionary authority needs to be granted to personnel at the school level. This in turn should create a variety of schooling options of acceptable quality. Preference among those options will be primarily on the basis of taste and should be left to the consumer, parent/child.

More specifically, functions which can be performed best at the metropolitan or state level, include:

Establishing general educational objectives and minimum educational standards;

Evaluating programs against public and selected private objectives and standards and making such information available to the public and to the profession;

Planning for and coordinating the development of educational services and facilities;

Negotiating salaries for all classifications of personnel;

Providing those few administrative and instructional services where economies of scale pertain;

Determining and providing necessary financial resources.

Functions which can best be performed at the school level by professional educators include:

Adopting a specific educational philosophy around which instructional programs may be designed;

Establishing specific educational objectives and standards;

Designing or adapting programs to meet those philosophies, objectives, and standards;

Evaluating programs against the school's specific objectives and standards;

Allocating resources to specific instructional programs;

Selecting personnel;

Teaching children.

By decentralizing instructional decisions, a variety of approaches to the educational process should be generated within general constraints established by state and/or metropolitan authorities. The educational consumer should be free to satisfy personal preferences from among these options.

A Prototype

Several state university systems provide prototypes of educational institutions which separate decision-making responsibilities with reference to finance, provision of services, and selection of schools. These universities have a single policymaking and coordinating body, yet operationally they rely on many quasi-independent components scattered about their respective states. In essence, the components are competitive units but operate wholly within the public sector and under general public scrutiny. These prototypes also have effective competition from nonpublic institutions, many of which receive some form of public subsidy.

The coordinating board is the societal overseer. It establishes general objectives for the system and monitors the development and operation of its components in the light of these objectives. It allocates resources on the basis of board priorities and budgetary requests

of the components. It carries on long-range planning to assure adequate facilities and adequate programming. The board may negotiate with employees for terms and conditions of employment, which are uniform throughout the state except for minor variations to accommodate peculiar local conditions.

The components coordinated by the central board display a great variety of forms, including two-year and four-year colleges; major university centers; technical, professional, and other specialized schools; correspondence schools; continuing education centers; and research centers. Within each category there is also much variation, reflecting decisions made by the professional staff within the general constraints established by the coordinating board. Specific curricular and personnel determinations are made at this level.

Admission is open to all qaulified persons regardless of their place of residence. The student bodies of the components vary markedly, reflecting, in part, selection criteria of the respective admission offices and, in part, a process of self-selection. Some students are drawn to an institution because of its curriculum, because of the reputation of its faculty and the success of its graduates, because of its social climate, because of its location, etc. While there may be a "pecking order" among components, for the most part selection of institutions is made on the basis of a match between personal and institutional interests. (Admittedly, institutions of higher learning are not noted for their equalitarian admissions policies. This does not mean that their governing boards do not have the power to make equalitarian policies but, rather, that they have not addressed the problem or that they have deliberately instituted selective policies. Existing

judicial precedents at the elementary and secondary levels should be sufficient to guarantee equitable admission policies at those levels.)

Translating this structure into one for providing public elementary and secondary education would mean the further centralization of certain functions, especially resource procurement and allocation, and the decentralization of other functions, especially administration of instruction and pupil assignment. The plan would involve creating districts whose populations are heterogeneous in nature and which are large enough to insure schooling options. Existing school district boundaries and attendance areas would be eliminated. The new districts would be responsible for the overall planning and coordinating of education in the area served and for securing economic resources. Instructional agencies, similar to present-day schools, would be retained. Parents would be granted freedom to select which schools their children are to attend. Figure 1 presents a schemata of the proposed structure.

The School

The schools are the building blocks of the structure in that they are entrusted with the responsibility of providing instructional services to children. They would be institutions similar to present schools but with greater independence from the central administration in matters related to program. Specific educational objectives would be determined at the school level within the framework of the general objectives established by the district and the state. Schools would select or develop the curriculum and the educational technology to be used in meeting those objectives. They would choose personnel from a general pool identified by the district. Each instructional unit would be free, and even encouraged, to develop its own educational programs.

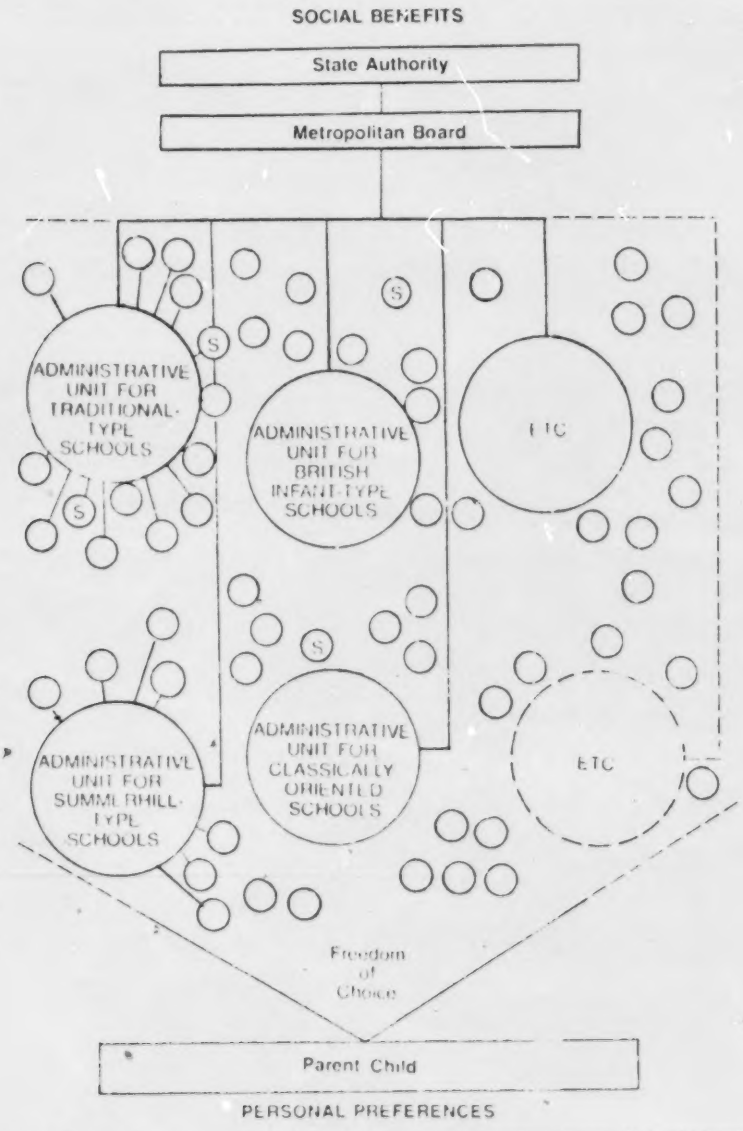

Figure 1
Schemata of the Uncommon Schools Model of School Governance

This independence of program would be reinforced in the financial planning process. Resources would be allocated by a formula developed at the district or state level. The formula should take into account the number of children enrolled plus any special characteristics of the children, such as educational or physical handicaps. Allocations within the unit would be determined by the unit within constraints of equity. Instructional units would be permitted to seek supplementary funding from private sources such as voluntary contributions by parents, foundations, or governmental sources. The district, itself, should provide incentive programs of supplemental funding for innovative programs. Such funding would be on a program-by-program basis and evaluation would be more extensive than for standard programs. The use of supplementary resources would provide an independent gauge of the adequacy of public support. It would also provide a mechanism for increasing investments in education from private sources. Schools would not be permitted to levy any mandatory fees and would not be permitted to discriminate in favor of those making voluntary contributions or against those who did not.

The vehicle for making policy in these units is not particularly critical since the consumer (parent/pupil) would hold the right to select among the services provided, greatly strengthening his input to policy decisions over what he has today. The nature of the policy makers would depend largely on the developmental process of the school. The policymaking for existing public schools would probably be dominated by the professional staff of the school with token parental input. The same would be true of new schools formed by professional educators. These new schools might well take on administrative characteristics of

a proprietorship -- being dominated by the founders. Some schools would be formed by groups of parents who had similar aspirations for their children. These would probably continue to be dominated by parents, employing professionals who shared their views. Various associations might undertake the sponsorship, and partial support, of schools. They, in turn, would undoubtedly dominate the policymaking process.

The philosophy and curriculum of a school should be appropriate for its student body. One of the criticisms of the present system is that too frequently the student is forced to fit the school. It may be unreasonable to develop a school for every child, but with many styles of schools to choose from, the parent and child may seek the one they believe to be most compatible with the child's needs and aspirations.

Implementing a philosophy is as dependent on the characteristics of the student body as on the characteristics of the staff, the pedagogy, and the setting. To insure that the school has a student body compatible with realizing its specified objectives, the school should be permitted some discretion in student admissions. On the other hand, society must guard against any invidious form of discrimination such as race, creed, and economic tests. The recommendation of the study of education vouchers by the Center for the Study of Public Policy[8] seems reasonable in this regard. It would permit the school to select 50 percent of its student body on the basis of "non-invidious" criteria approved by the district's governing board. The other 50 percent would be selected by lottery. Under-subscribed schools would admit all applicants. Because of family convenience and the desirability of encouraging strong family ties to schools, special consideration should

be given to younger siblings of students enrolled, or previously enrolled, in the school.

Once a child is admitted to a school, the school should be obliged to provide for the education of the child until he has completed the course of study. Under extraordinary circumstances, a school may find it necessary to expel a child. Evidence supporting such an action would be submitted to the district, which would arbitrate the matter and counsel both the school and the parents of the child. The parents should be provided with the services of an educational ombudsman, if they so desired, to insure the protection of their rights. On the other hand, a parent should be free to withdraw a child from a school at any time as long as the parent could comply with the compulsory attendance laws by enrolling the child in another school.

The District

The capstone of the structure is the district. In small states, there may be no need to subdivide into districts. In very large metropolitan areas, it may be expedient to create several districts, possibly along county lines. In nonmetropolitan areas, a district might consist of one or several counties. The guiding criterion should be to provide districts whose populations are heterogeneous in nature and which are large enough to insure schooling options. The district's governing board would be selected through an appropriate political process which would insure broad representation. It would be primarily responsible for setting general policy, planning, securing economic resources, and policing the educational marketplace.

The district would be responsible for representing the public interest in education at the "local level." Except for highly specialized

services, it would not operate schools but would establish general policy for them. This redefinition of "local" restores to the policy-making process dialogue between all groups and interests concerned with education -- albeit far removed from personal participation. Much of the inflexibility of present educational policy can be attributed to the lack of such dialogue caused by the highly fragmented and homogeneous nature of local policymaking bodies. There is little dialogue between interest groups. There are few grounds for compromise because the "haves" have it all and the "have nots" have little with which to bargain. The only bodies that presently have direct authority to establish educational policy and that also represent all interest groups are state legislatures. As a result, many educational problems that probably could be handled more effectively at an intermediate level if a vehicle such as the proposed were available have been referred to the state level. Thus, while in one sense vesting general policymaking authority in the newly defined district board represents centralization of authority, in another sense it represents decentralization of state authority.

The district would be responsible for planning and implementing a comprehensive educational program. It would annually make a census of the number and characteristics of the school-age population. It would continually appraise the educational requirements of the district and the adequacy of available resources and institutions for meeting those requirements. When gaps between requirements and resources were discovered, it would be the responsibility of the district to initiate appropriate action to close them.

The district would have the only authority, other than the state, to levy taxes for school purposes and to receive state and federal

financial assistance for educational purposes. Collective bargaining with all classifications of personnel would be conducted by the district. Financial allocations to instructional units would be made on a per-pupil basis as noted above. (Schools could determine the number and kinds of personnel to employ within the limits of their budgets and labor agreements, but they could not determine wage scales.) The district would construct and maintain buildings according to specifications of the instructional units and would hold title to all facilities.

The district could directly operate certain highly specialized services such as schools for handicapped, camps, museums, art galleries, libraries, film centers, audio-visual production, public television and radio, etc. Operation and maintenance of owned facilities would be the direct responsibility of the district. It would provide to schools such administrative services as payroll, accounting, purchasing, and centralized personnel recruiting, for example. It would provide for the transportation of children where such services were needed. It would be responsible for enforcing compulsory attendance laws.

One of the most important and sensitive of the districts' responsibilities would be the policing of the educational marketplace. For a competitive market to work there needs to be an information system whereby parent/child consumers have complete and accurate information about the quality and price of educational services and whereby instructional units are able to appraise the effectiveness of their services as compared to that of their competitors. Providing reliable and understandable information is a particularly complex problem in education, and it should not be left to chance that such a system

would develop even though such have developed with respect to higher education. To meet this need, the district continually would evaluate the effectiveness of instructional units against public objectives and selected private objectives. It regularly would publish the results of the evaluations. Advertising by instructional units would be carefully regulated. The district would also provide counseling centers, particularly in poverty areas, which would assist parents who desire assistance in selecting an institution or who have grievances against an administrative or instructional unit. The annual census itself would play an important role in the information diffusion process.

This procedure would not in itself eliminate socioeconomically and/or ethnically homogeneous schools. If the district board, or state or federal authorities, deemed that socioeconomic or ethnic balance of designated proportions were desirable, they could establish such quotas for each school. In so doing, they would be specifying the mix (which is a legitimate societal concern), while leaving to the parent the choice of which desegregated school his child would attend.

Administrative Units

Schools could relate directly to the district administration. This would be preferable in smaller districts, but in large districts, the number of schools would make it difficult for the central administration to deal with them individually. Here it would be advantageous for instructional units to band together for certain administrative functions according to similarity of characteristics, not necessarily geographic proximity. In many respects, such administrative units would be comparable to franchising corporations. The number of children

served by an administrative unit could vary from a very few to several thousand.

Each administrative unit could specialize in a particular type of instructional organization, e.g., traditional, British Infant, Summerhill, classical. The component schools of an administrative unit might be scattered throughout the district, or they might be concentrated on a single site as an educational park. An instructional unit, or school, of one administrative unit could well be within blocks of instructional units operated by other administrative units. In densely populated areas, this would provide parents the choice of several educational programs within walking distance of their homes even though publicly financed transportation would be scheduled by the district for children electing to attend schools beyond walking distance. It also provides a mechanism for decentralizing large city school systems without reintroducing the rigidity of boundary lines and school attendance areas.

When a school is part of an administrative unit, it would relate to the district administration only through that unit. When the district administration determines that expansion is necessary, it would authorize an appropriate administrative unit to proceed. The unit would then use its expertise to spawn a new school much as a franchising corporation spawns new outlets.

Private Institutions

There is enough flexibility within the proposed structure to encourage many non-public schools to merge with the public system. To qualify for merger, a school would have to agree not to charge tuition in addition to the amount received from the district. This would

eliminate most socio-economic elite institutions from receiving public funds because their costs are above those of public schools. A merged school would be subject to the same admission and administrative procedures as other public schools. It would have to submit to the general prescriptions of the metropolitan board. Because of constitutional bars, the policy boards of former parochial schools would probably have to be placed under secular control. Many religiously affiliated institutions of higher learning have already taken such a step to qualify for state and federal aid. Additionally, chapel and religious instruction could not be required, but accommodations could easily be made whereby children desiring such could conveniently work it into their school day. Teachers would have to meet prescribed metropolitan or state standards and they would be employees of the metropolitan district. This means that certified teachers belonging to religious orders would be secularly employed at full salary. The precedents for this have also already been set.

It would still be in the public interest to encourage more heterogeneous enrollment in private schools which find the above constraints too restrictive to merge with the public schools and choose to remain private. One approach would be to let the school prescribe the number of spaces it had available for general applicants up to a maximum 50% of all spaces. These would be filled by lottery and the school would be paid under a contractual arrangement an amount equal to that which would be allocated to public schools for the same students. To make accepting general students more attractive to private schools, an additional amount could be paid in partial recognition of the contributions being made to the general social benefit in the instruction of

regular tuition students. A measure of social benefit could be defined as the proportion of students accepted under general admissions. For example, a private school accepting 10% of its student body under general admissions would receive the normal allocation for the 10%. For the 90% admitted under restricted admissions, the school would receive 10% of the normal pupil allocation for pupils with no recognized handicaps. Private schools would not be eligible for construction assistance and would be obligated to own or lease their own space.

New Schools

A district should encourage the establishment of new schools. Two of the primary purposes of the entire structure are to promote competition and to stimulate the development of genuine educational alternatives. A special office should be organized to work with persons and groups desiring to start new schools. This office would provide technical advice and assist the new school in recruiting a student body. A new school would receive the standard pupil allocation the first year in addition to housing. The "alternative" school movement of recent years has shown that it is relatively inexpensive to start up a new school. They are typically heavily subsidized at first by professionals and parents enthusiastic about the new arrangement. After a year or two, as the enthusiasm wanes, the schools must become self-supporting or they will perish. The standard public allocation would be sufficient to guarantee their continuation and indeed to encourage their establishment. The initial subsidization by contributions in kind by parents and professionals could serve to reduce initial personnel costs in order to meet the abnormally high capital costs for books and equipment experienced by new schools in their first years

of operation. If the school fails, the public has lost nothing. If it succeeds, it has another functioning institution from which to select educational services. Schools refused funding by the district board should have access to the courts as a safeguard against arbitrary and capricious decisions.

Parents

The psychological impact on the parent would be enormous. Parents could assess their private educational goals for their children and select among available schools those which appear to be best equipped to meet those goals. If not satisfied with the progress of their child, they would hold the option of withdrawing from one institution and enrolling in another. This gives to the parents much of the power of determination over the education of their children that is presently assumed by the state, thereby involving parents most intimately in the educational process. Undoubtedly for many parents, this constitutes more responsibility and involvement than they desire. For these, decisions concerning their children's education could be delegated to a counselor provided at public expense.

Schooling decisions would be made with far more information than is presently available. The parent could not only review statistics but actually visit schools and speak with his children's potential teachers. He would be familiar with a variety of schools. Today it is not uncommon for a parent to be unfamiliar with even his child's school. Once a child is enrolled in a school under the proposed system, the parent is likely to maintain this personal contact because if his child is unhappy and isn't learning, the parent has real power to do something about it. Educators today complain of the apathy of parents.

This apathy is probably the product of a realistic appraisal by parents that their input doesn't count for much rather than of a lack of interest. This new parental power should also reshape the attitudes of professional educators, causing them to be more cognizant of and solicitous of parents and their children.

SUMMARY COMMENTS

It took about 50 years for the elements of the public school compromise to be hammered out once the process was begun in the late eighteenth century. There is no reason to believe that it will take any less time to develop a new compromise. We are probably about 25 years into the process. Suburban development first began to have a serious impact on the character of urban development following World War II. Brown v. Topeka redefined equity with respect to race in 1954. Serrano v. Priest redefined equity with respect to resources in 1971. Alternative schools of the 1960s sharpened awareness of the great variety of ways for organizing the educational process. Decentralization movements got under way about the same time. Evaluations of schooling processes conducted during the late 1960s and the 1970s provided a basis for appraising what schools can do and what they can't do given existing knowledge.

The purpose of the preceding presentation has been to relate the heightening of social tensions over school issues to changes in society at large and in schools in particular which are asynchronous and to propose a reshaping of the governance of education in the light of those changes. It is intended that the discussion should further the process of developing a new compromise by defining the problem more broadly than has been done previously and by linking events which are

generally treated as unrelated. It would be audacious to suggest that the proposed solution is "the" solution to a very complex problem: rather, it is designed to serve as a contrast to the status quo, intended to trigger the suggestion of other alternatives. It is merely an event in a process that should see a total reform in school government by the year 2000.

NOTES

[1]L. A. Cremins, The American Common School (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1951).

[2]Center for the Study of Public Policy, Education Vouchers: A Report on Financing Education by Grants to Parents (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for the Study of Public Policy, 1970).

[3]For a review of recent studies on economies of scale in education see: Austin D. Swanson, et. al., A Study of Regional Services and School District Organization in New York State (Albany, New York: State Education Department, Public Law 93,380, Section 842 Staff), Chapter IV, pp. 54-77.

[4]M. Friedman, Capitalism and Freedom (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 97.

[5]J. Revel, Without Marx or Jesus: The New American Revolution Has Begun (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 72-74.

[6]M. Friedman, Capitalism and Freedom, p. 24.

[7]Christopher Jenchs, "Is the Public School Obsolete?", The Public Interest, Winter 1966, p. 22.

[8]Center for the Study of Public Policy, Education Vouchers, pp. 80-82, 84.